

SOUTH AFRICAN RADIO LEAGUE NEWS SUNDAY 27 DECEMBER 2015

Good morning and welcome to the weekly news bulletin of the South African Radio League read by [your name, call sign and QTH]

You can tune in to the South African Radio League news bulletin on Sunday mornings at 08:15 Central African Time in Afrikaans and at 08:30 Central African Time in English on HF and on many VHF and UHF repeaters around the country. Echolink listeners can connect to ZS0JPL for a relay. A podcast is available from the League's web site.

This audio bulletin can be downloaded from the League's website at www.sarl.org.za. You will find this bulletin and previous bulletins in text format under the news link on the left-hand side of the web page. While you are there, you can sign up to receive future bulletins by e-mail.

In the news today

AMATEUR RADIO ACTIVATION OF NORTH KOREA

KIDS DAY IS SUNDAY 3 JANUARY

and

AUSTRALIAN PICO BALLOON ENCIRCLED THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

Stay tuned for more on these and other interesting news items.

** The ARRL reports the first amateur radio operation from Pyongyang, Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 13 years took place on 20 December. In an unexpected turn of events, Polish DXer Dom Gryzb, 3Z9DX, who has been visiting North Korea this week in advance of a planned amateur radio operation early next year, came on the air from the most-wanted DXCC entity around 00:00 UTC on 20 December. Dom, P5/3Z9DX was active on both 20 and 15 metres SSB only and a few hundred stations were fortunate enough to work him.

Propagation was unfavourable due to a geomagnetic storm that seems to have affected his efforts on 20 metres. He also reported that he faced extremely high ambient noise levels in Pyongyang. He ran 100 W into a vertical antenna mounted on a metal fencepost some 2 metres above the ground among government high-rise buildings.

You will find two stories about this event at www.arrl.org/news

** The next Kids Day will be on Sunday 3 January 2016, from 18:00 to 24:00 UTC. The twice-yearly event, sponsored by the ARRL and the Boring Amateur Radio Club from Oregon, is an excellent opportunity to highlight amateur radio and amateur radio satellites to youngsters and even to hand over the keys so they can get some hands-on experience. Share the excitement with your own children or grandkids or youngsters in the neighbourhood! For youngsters, their

positive amateur radio experience may foster an interest that leads them to get licensed one day. For veteran radio amateurs, it is a chance to share their stations and affection for Amateur Radio with the next generation.

Call “CQ Kids Day.” The suggested exchange is name, age, location and favourite colour. Repeater contacts are okay too, and satellite contacts may provide a real thrill. All participants are encouraged to post stories and photos to the Kids Day Soapbox page and are eligible to receive a colourful certificate. You can download the free certificate, customized with the youngsters’ names, after filling out the Kids Day Survey found on the same page as the certificate generator. Visit www.arrl.org/kids-day for all the information.

** AO-85 Slow Scan TV Image likely a prank and not a test. A Slow Scan TV (SSTV) image that a Brazilian radio amateur reported receiving on 13 December from Fox-1A (AO-85) was most likely a prank, not any sort of official test of the satellite’s SSTV capabilities. AMSAT Vice President for Engineering Jerry Buxton, N0JY, said the Robot 36 image, which depicted a cartoon fox and the legend “Testing Fox-1A/AO-85 AMSAT satellite,” was of terrestrial origin and transmitted via the AO-85 satellite’s transponder.

“I can tell you that in South America, they are having some fun and that our analogue-to-digital to analogue IHU processing of the audio seems to work very well at SSTV frequencies!” Buxton told the ARRL. “I do not know who uplinked the signal, but it was a ground-satellite-ground contact, nothing that originated on AO-85.” Buxton called the prank “just a very good demonstration of the capability of the FM repeater on the Fox-1 series satellites.” The FM satellite uplink is at 435,170 MHz (67 Hz CTCSS tone required). The downlink is at 145,978 MHz. Both frequencies are subject to Doppler shift.

** The Australian solar powered pico balloon, PS-56, which had a catastrophic GPS tracking failure, has been tracked by its weak CW signal, having encircled the southern hemisphere. Meantime its sister balloon, PS-57, crossed over the equator and is now in the northern hemisphere.

Balloon PS-56 was launched by Andy Nguyen, VK3YT, from Melbourne on Saturday 28 November, who said it passed the usual pre-flight tests, but shortly after it went up there were no WSPR or JT9 packets, but the balloon payload sent the default Morse code sequence only. Andy, VK3YT, put out a call for a watch-out for the balloon. Not giving up easily, VK and ZL trackers took up the challenge. The ingenuity of radio amateur’s trackers has enabled this balloon flight to be tracked without a working GPS. He explained that using the Sun greyline at sunset and sunrise, antenna bearing and wind prediction, the balloon position could be estimated.

Bob ZL1RS tracked PS-56 like this for a week, before it got to South America and went out of range. However, by 13 December, it popped up again on his waterfall, and tracking resumed. Fast forward to Saturday 19 December, John, VK2FAK, and Joe, VK5EI, spotted PS-56 with strong signal strength. Then on Sunday 20 December, Bob, ZL1RS, had the position of PS-56 based on the

limited data available. Andy, VK3YT, said, “Thanks to the efforts of trackers, it has been confirmed as having circumnavigated the Southern Hemisphere, and is still flying.” What will it do in the coming days – wait and see!

You are listening to a news bulletin of the South African Radio League.

** A new version of the 2016 South African Radio League Diary of Events has been uploaded to the League website following information received from the West Rand ARC about their flea markets for 2016. To get a copy of the diary, visit the web site and click on SARL Diary of Events on the left hand menu.

** Hunting Lions in the Air is an annual event allowing members of the Lions organisation to make contact with fellow Lions via amateur radio. The event takes place on 9 and 10 January and commemorates the birth of the Melvin Jones the founder of Lions Clubs International on 13 January. Contact your local Lions Club and invite them to participate in this event.

** The first Youth Net for 2016 takes place on Sunday 10 January at the new time of 15:00 UTC on 7 070 kHz.

** In 2015, IARU Region 1 initiated a new Youth Contesting Programme (YCP). Youth members from Region 1 member societies were invited to take part in a contest from so-called “Top-Gun” stations. These young amateurs learnt how to operate the contest station, improve their contesting skills and aim for the best results together as a team. A video from the first YCP event can be seen on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=0b3slQ1NGJA&feature=youtu.be

** The PEARS National VHF/UHF contest takes place on 15 to 17 January 2016. There are two sessions over a two-day period that can cover all possible propagation modes, and offer a wonderful outing for camping and field stations. The first session starts at 16:00 UTC on Friday and ends at 14:00 UTC on Saturday. The second session commences immediately after 14:00 UTC and ends at 12:00 UTC on Sunday. This is the time when there will be many VHF amateurs on the air from different divisions with good propagation conditions, making possible countrywide contacts on analogue and digital from 50 to 1 296 MHz. See the 2016 Blue Book for all the rules.

** Hannes Coetzee, ZS6BZP, reports that the solar activity is expected to be at moderate to high levels. Big Sunspot AR2473 can be the source of C- and M-class solar flares. If you want to do your own frequency predictions, the expected effective sunspot number for the week will be around 70.

The 20 to 10 m bands will provide lots DX fun, especially during the mornings and early evenings. Please visit the website spaceweather.sansa.org.za for further information.

Now for the diary of events

31 December – destroy your copy of the 2015 Blue Book
1 January – download a copy of the 2016 Blue Book
3 January – Kids Day activity
6 January – the NARC opens for business
9 and 10 January – Hunting Lions in the Air
10 January

the SARL Youth Net on 7 070 at 15:00 UTC 15 to 17 January the PEARS National VHF and UHF Contest 23 January Summer QRP Contest 31 January
The closing date for nomination for Council and the submission of motions for the AGM

To end this bulletin, a recap of our main news item this morning.

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** Clubs and individuals are invited to submit news items of interest to radio amateurs and shortwave listeners, if possible, in both English and Afrikaans, by following the news inbox link on the South African Radio League web page. News items for inclusion in the bulletin should reach the news team no later than the Thursday preceding the bulletin date.

You are welcome to join us every Sunday morning for the weekly amateur radio magazine programme 'Amateur Radio Today' at 10:00 Central African Time. The programme can be heard on VHF and UHF repeaters countrywide and on 7 082 kHz lower side-band and on 7 205 kHz and 17 760 kHz AM. There is also a podcast available from Dick Stratford, ZS6RO. A rebroadcast can be heard on Monday evenings at 18:30 Central African Time on 3 230 kHz AM.

We welcome your signal reports, comments and suggestions; send these by e-mail to artoday@sarl.org.za. Sentech sponsors the radio transmissions on the non-amateur frequencies.

You have listened to a news bulletin compiled by Dennis Green, ZS4BS, edited by Dave Reece, ZS1DFR, and read by ..

The entire news team wishes you and yours a happy new year filled with success, good health and amateur radio.

73 and 88, thank you for listening

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